

Annual Updates Are Necessary and Important

by S. Robert Powell

Writing the history of an organization, company, community or any other similar entity is an open-ended process. To proclaim, for example, that everything that can ever be known about the history of Tudor England or the Erie Canal or Abraham Lincoln or the Industrial Revolution, for example, is naive. There is always more to learn, and the door, so to speak, always remains open.

Similarly, writing the history of a company such as the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company / the Delaware and Hudson Railroad is a never-ending process. Much has been written about the D&H, as we all know, but the final word on the history of the D&H has not yet been said or written or presented. New D&H material (photos, texts of all kinds, objects, equipment) is always surfacing, and it must be "captured" / recorded / preserved before it disappears forever. Similarly, revisions to existing material about a company, an institution, a work of art, are not only inevitable but also an important component of the history of that entity.

Four Sources of "new" D&H material:

1. Former D&H Employees Sharing Photos and Experiences: There are many former D&H employees who are now showing, on *Facebook* (Delaware & Hudson group) and on D&H sites on the Internet, photos of D&H colleagues and/or equipment, all with accurate and meaningful captions. These photos, especially those of people, are very choice, and if they are not captured/downloaded when first posted, they may never surface again.
2. Posts on-line (or declarations in person or in print) by well-intentioned and self-proclaimed "experts" who are only guessing and who don't know what they are talking about must be

corrected—for the record. Such “experts” confuse, for example, date plaques on bridges for mile posts; they identify property markers for mile posts and vice versa; they identify the “Little Starrucca” bridge as the Harpursville trestle (“Little Starrucca” is in Pennsylvania, about 2.62 miles north of the Thompson station; the Harpursville trestle is in Harpursville, NY, straight-line distance: 23.28 miles to the north of “Little Starrucca”); they fail to understand that the D&H began rail operations on October 9, 1829, and not at the end of the nineteenth century when the D&H Gravity Railroad closed; they are not quite sure where the Pennsylvania division of the D&H began or ended or why it was important in the history of the D&H; they identify the coal and packet boats on the D&H Canal as barges; and on and on. Their intentions are good, but the material that they (self-proclaimed experts) present is frequently specious. *Caveat emptor!* For the sake of the historical record, their incorrect or misleading statements must be identified and corrected.

3. Despite the best efforts of authors, editors, and proofreaders, clarifications and/or corrections in published material (on paper or in an electronic format), when identified, must be made. Those clarifications and/or corrections are easily made in later editions of the published material in question (if they are ever produced). The important procedure to follow is to identify those errors in an *Errata* so that all readers/spectators from that point on will recognize them as unintentional errors in a previous edition of that work (e.g., “In the 1987 edition of the present work, the railroad station shown on page 188 was thought to be in Syracuse, NY. We now know that the station in this photo is in Poughkeepsie, NY.”)

4. Enrichments to the extant published history about a given topic. Never-before published material about the Racket Brook Breaker, for example, may have recently been discovered in a filing cabinet in a local warehouse. For the record, that material must be saved for the historical record (these days, by scanning) and widely distributed.

In the years following the publication by the present writer of 24 volumes about the D&H Gravity Railroad (there are 12,016 pages in the 24 volumes that were published in the period October 9, 2014 and October 9, 2018) a substantial body of data has surfaced not only about the D&H Gravity Railroad (e.g., the location of the raceway and overshot waterwheel on Plane No. 15 has been identified; the minutes of the meetings of the D&H Board of Directors in the period January 5, 1894--December 30, 1936 have surfaced) but also about the Delaware and Hudson Railroad in general. The source of much of these new data about the D&H in general is the Delaware & Hudson Railroad group page on *Facebook* (there are 4.5K members in the group at present).

Saving Newly-Learned D&H Material:

To save this newly-learned, recently surfaced, and/or “corrected” material--about the D&H Gravity Railroad and about the Delaware and Hudson Railroad, in general, the author has published an annual *Addendum* to his 24 volumes on the D&H. In the 2018 *Addendum*, there are 444 pages; in 2019, there are 412 pages, in 2020, there are 400 pages; in 2021, there are 334 pages; in 2022, there are 247 pages; in 2023, there are 285 pages. (We mention here the number of pages in these *Addenda*—which are important components of the history of the D&H--to underline the fact that a great deal of “new” or recently surfaced, or “corrected” material about the D&H is brought forward annually.) On December 31, 2024, *Addendum VII* will be published. In all of these *Addenda*, it goes without saying, full credit is given for every item as to the source of this newly-learned and/or corrected data about the D&H.

And so, gathering, synthesizing and publishing new or recently surfaced, or “corrected” material about the D&H continues. The door remains open. There is always more to learn.

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